DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 671 EA 018 065

AUTHOR Gray, Harry
TITLE Management Development in Areas Where the Concern for Such Activity Is Recent. Some Preliminary Notes.
PUB DATE Sep 83
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Consultants; Educational Economics; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Problems; Foreign Countries; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Leadership Training; *Management Development; Organizational Change; *Professional Development; *Supervisory Training
IDENTIFIERS United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Perceptions regarding the theory and practive of educational management development in the United Kingdom are offered in this essay. It is suggested that most educators prefer theoretical discussion of management to practical help, and that teachers often are difficult to teach on account of intellectual egotism--a resistance to experiential learning. Yet management development is essentially an affective process in which a manager reflects on his own experience in order to develop appropriate theories, and authority derives from his own understanding. Accordingly, there are certain principles that apply to the introduction of management thinking across the board. The first is that trainees need both a cognitive and experiential understanding of how organizations work; the more financial awareness can be brought to rank and file members, the more managers will feel the need to think and act with true managerial responsibility. The use of consultants is recommended as a way to bring about satisfactory management development. It is probable that many new sectors will open to good management quickly, now that a national awareness of economic restraints and opportunities has been encouraged and sustained. (TE)

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# MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS WHERE THE CONCERN FOR SUCH ACTIVITY IS RECENT

## Some Preliminary Notes

Harry Gray

September 1983

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One of the effects of our current economic crisis seems to be that more people are taking management seriously - or at least claim to be - and some important sectors that had remained largely outside mainstream management development are beginning to acknowledge that there may be something to be learned from commerce and the public services. My own experience has been largely with education and voluntary organisations and I think it will be useful to share my perceptions since I have no reason to believe they are not equally relevant to other sectors, new and established.

In education, serious management thinking is about fifteen years old. Many will be surprised that there is any history at all of management thinking in education but it may be salutary to recollect that a long time can elapse before a general awareness reaches sufficient mass for observable progress to occur. Some of the original thinking was academic and theoretical engaging university and later polytechnic minds rather than practitioners. As the practitioners moved on the scene they tended to prefer the promulgation of current best practice as heads of schools perceived it, tips for teachers. This is still the strongest voice in education management in both the secondary and F.E. sectors. Primary education is a little more open to leadership training while polytechnics and universities studiously ignore management development probably because it is taught by members of the institutions themselves. Most serious attention to education management occurs in polytechnics but they are no better at actual practice than other institutions of higher education. Nevertheless, their concern is more with management than education unlike universities where the position is reversed.

Most commonly an interest in management development is expressed by senior staff as being useful for their colleagues. It is still common for heads and principals to see management training as necessary for others but not for themselves. There is a trend to collect training material (usually case studies which can be talked about) and examples of "best practice" as a means of avoiding a serious examination of management and policy issues at the top organisational level. Heads also like to explain how well they do things and this tendenacy to self-publicity often emanates from authoritarian and mechanistic heads.

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In spite of the frequently declared interest in management that is practical, most educators do not want practical help but prefer to enjoy theoretical discussion. There is a vexatious paradox among educational leaders that even when pressed they prefer to talk rather than do. As soon as the conversation moves towards looking at actual problems in the school a shutter comes down emblazoned with slogans like "schools are not like other organisations" or "our college is different" or "you couldn't do that here" or "of course, you don't really understand the kinds of problems we have in education". There is a strong rejection of industrial etc. management concepts as being inapplicable to "education" often reinforced with moral and ethical disapproval. Apparently, schools are more moral institutions than factories, shops, and offices - and perhaps the world at large. Few schools seem to understand the relationship between management (seen as just another "subject") and curriculum which in practice has a disembodied theoretical and organsational practice - a history of almost unquestioned assumptions.

Teachers are among the most difficult people to teach. They are very good - and very slippary - at cerebral activity. They can debate with all the casuistry of the Jesuits and have an infinite capacity for special pleading and changing their ground. Although one might expect education to be about personal change, teachers find change very difficult. They block their own change by constantly redefining their intellectual ground and many of them find experiential learning (however mild and pre-structured its form) exceedingly threatening. They seem unused to learning by doing and frequently incapable of transferring learning from a training situation to the back home reality. When they do manage to grasp concepts like "appraisal" or "objective setting" they seem incapable of adapting it to their own situation but simply add it on like jam or peanut butter without analysing its essential properties.

Management development is essentially an affective process requiring the need to reflect on experience in order to develop appropriate theories. Quite obviously the training problem arises from that nature of much educational practice which is solely concerned with content and remembering rather than process and practice. In management practice the manager learns to accept responsibility for himself and be aware that authority lies in his own understanding. Teachers still tend to believe that authority and responsibility derive from following the decisions and teachings of an "authority" higher than themselves. It is remarkable how often teachers consider themselves the victims of management rather than people who can actually do something them-

selves. Ask teachers about changing the examination system, for instance, and they will usually claim that they are personally totally without influence. It is strongly ingrained in the teacher-mind (especially in some areas like Wales!) that management is doing well what educational administrators require to be done and does not demand the exercise of personal initiative or autonomy.

There is no reason to believe, however, that teachers are very unlike the members of any newly emergent management group. Certainly I have found the same kind of blocking reaction with Youth workers, members of churches, nurses and voluntary workers. There is always a primary problem of providing that "management theory and practice" as generally understood relates to their own form of organisation and then helping them to understand that their own practice and behaviour can be changed without undermining their own ethical position. Perhaps other groups find learning easier than teachers but there is always the problem of transference to the real life situation. Probably those of us familiar with management thinking forget just how long it has taken us to be socialised into the climate of management thinking and we all disagree strong enough among ourselves. It is very hard for anyone new to management to understand the basis of much of our thinking.

I think there are some principles that apply to the introduction of management thinking that work across the board. The first principle that trainees need to understand how organisations work; they need a grounding in organisation theory and how people function in groups of various sizes as well as an introduction to the causes and forms of personal behaviour such as motivation, commitment and self interest. I believe the best way to gaining an understanding of organisation theory is by the reflexive process of reflecting on the individual's own experience so that everyone builds his personal theories. I do not believe that learning is a solely cognitive process but depends on affective development as the condition for appropriate cognition. Such learning is difficult and often painful since it questions much of what an individual already believes. Management and personal development cannot occur without some (often a good deal) personal pain and emotional (not to mention intellectual) discomfort and we do no one a service by trying to make learning easy. Unfortunately the cost is considerable and management development in education illustrates the problems encountered very clearly - hence the terror that the mention of T-Groups arouses in the mind of many teachers who have yet no idea whatsoever of what Encounter Groups involve. Perhaps the difficulty in learning experiences by teachers arises because formal education largely ignores emotions - learning by concentrating only on

the intellectual and cognitive. Teachers are just not used to learning in a full and comprehensive way and so are greatly threatened by management.

I can see little evidence that starting with "technical" approaches to management development does any more than postpone the emotional crises of management learning. For many years, school management was preoccupied with the (secondary) school timetable and all that happened on courses was that heads exchanged fantasies and stories and never seriously questioned the nature of the curriculum which timetables reflect and hardly ever did they re-examine the roles, purposes and structures of the schools. Even now, heads love "structural" solutions without ever seeming to be aware that they are actually talking about ideological (often authoritarian) reform rather than management issues and problems. It is always worth remembering that the process of management thinking is virtually the same as philosophical analysis - management is practical philosophy because it asks the same questions, in the same way as philosophy but with the intention of determining action. Technical solutions follow from the analytical process, they do not precede it. The dilemma for management teaching is that technical problems are invariably the way into management issues and it is difficult to maintain the exploratory process long enough for technical responses to achieve validity.

On the whole teachers just do not think like managers in that they are barely aware of the costs or outcomes of what they do in any organisational sense (if they did consider outcomes, for instance, they would have to think differently about the "wastage" that occurs in the percentage failure rate of public examinations). Of course, schools and colleges do not procure their own resources but are distant subsystems in the educational decision making and responsibility structure. That is a reason why they are badly managed not an essential characteristic. Perhaps schools will never be properly managed until they are much closer to social and economic realities; perhaps all schools should receive a direct grant rather than be allocated funds from LEAs. But all "new" sectors lack this managerial and economic awareness even churches which one would have thought were only too aware of economic exigencies. Helping managers to think like managers is a precondition for proper management behaviour. The more financial awareness can be brought to rank and file members the more managers will feel the need to think and act with true managerial responsibility. The more distant an individual is from decision making the less "managerial" will be his thinking.

Initially, new sectors choose to train managers off the job. Perhaps it is

a measurement of managerial maturity that more and more training is done on the job or job-related and in teams rather than by individuals. Some schools have begun to do this so have some churches and voluntary bodies. The snag usually is their relationship to others in the organisation who may be less emotionally committed or financially involved. With voluntary organisations membership is seldom an ecomonic involvement (no financial rewards) but a matter of personal satisfaction with little organisational commitment other than as an extension of self-interest. Schools, perhaps, have too long a tradition of individualisation for corporate responsibility to have much initial appeal. Voluntary organisations traditionally send key members away on courses or conferences but this is usually seen as a reward in itself rather than a training event with functional responsibilities afterwards. Teachers, too, have usually understood development as personal not organisational, a view reinforced by the parsimonious attitude of education authorities towards paying the full cost of course attendance. But it is essential for off the job training in the new sectors to be followed by intensive work with colleagues back at work, and every effort should be made to ensure that this happens in practice not just in promise.

It may be that the use of consultants in education will be one of the best ways of bringing about satisfactory management development. Employing consultants is actually often cheaper than sending several staff on a course and there is some experience of bargaining for in-house consultancy in this way. Psychologically schools often see this as a "good deal" and once the consultant is in the school, future visits can be negotiated and key members can be attracted to outside courses. However, consultants are usually invited to tackle the wrong problems or, at best, a presenting aspect of a deeper problem. There is no way round this but to work with what is available and hope that the job will be well enough done for further invitations to come. Consultant fees are often too high for new sectors but in many cases funds can be found and many consultants will take a reduced fee in the hope of further business. Once a consultant is seen to have done a good job, there are plenty of ways of raising adequate sums even in the imprecunious education service (which is not so really short of money as its often declared).

My own view is that many new sectors will open to good management quite quickly now that a national awareness of economic restraints and opportunities has been encouraged and sustained. One does not need to hold a specific political ideology to believe that management practice everywhere can be greatly improved but that the essential condition for change is organisational

discomfort. There can be few, if any, organisations in the U.K. today that do not have that necessary discomfort and disequilibrium that is essential for change. While many of us may disapprove of the current causes of "unfreezing", none of us can let the opportunity pass. Perhaps if more effort on training professionals were to go into the "new areas", a greater social change would take place than from a concentration on the traditional areas. The backwoodsmen may be a bigger long term influence on national values than the captains of industry and politics.